





out to be a couple of European electricians who have been engaged in erecting the telegraph line, and had gathered together their employers for the simple object of having their photographs taken. As regards the group, which was composed of some sixty Chinese, we hope that the cameras failed to produce a faithful portrait, as a mass of me hideous countenances we have never witnessed, and the Foochow natives, who had out of curiosity assembled, were handsome in comparison and although raimus uniform, presented a far more cleanly appearance. The two Swedish gentlemen appeared however to be rather proud of their staff than otherwise, and we must certainly admit that they have not lost their reputation of being steady, intelligent, and good workmen during their temporary residence in Foochow.

#### FEARFUL EXPLOSION ON BOARD A RIVER STEAMER.

The following was issued as an "Extra" today:—

News of a most disastrous and fearful explosion on board the Canton and Macao Steamboat Co.'s steamer *Yatsei*, reached the Colony late yesterday evening, on the arrival here of those of the crew and passengers who had survived. As most of our readers are aware, the *Yatsei* was taken off the Canton and Macao line, on which she had been running, a few months ago, to have new boilers put in, and to undergo a thorough overhaul at the Kowloon Docks. The work on the steamer was completed last week, and yesterday afternoon she started on a trial trip to Macao, having on board a number of Europeans as passengers. The steamer was under the command of Captain Hayland, with Mr Woods as chief engineer, and the names of the passengers were:—Mr D. E. Caldwell, (solicitor); Mr. and Mrs. R. Fraser-Smith; Mr and Mrs. Stuart Fraser-Smith; Mr G. Frizell, Draughtsman, Hongkong & Whampoa Dock Co.; Mr. J. S. Brewer, Government Surveyor of Ships; Mr. W. L. Scott, Superintendent of Kowloon Docks; Mr. S. F. Pinker, Foreman Engineer, Kowloon Docks; and Mr P. A. da Costa, Secretary of the Hongkong, Canton and Macao Steamboat Company. The steamer left Kowloon Docks, by appointment, at a quarter to one o'clock, and, on her way through the harbour, stopped to pick up the passengers, who went off to her in a launch from Puddar's Wharf. There was then only 12 lbs. of steam in the boilers, though the working valves were fixed at 25 lbs.; the Government valves were to be adjusted by Mr. Brewer on the way to Macao to stand 25 lbs. pressure. After picking up the passengers, the *Yatsei* proceeded on her journey, slowly, owing to the adverse tide and the small quantity of steam in the boilers. On this account Mr. da Costa asked Captain Hayland to take the inner channel, where there would be smoother water. This was done, and after the steamer had passed through the Cap Sui Mun Pass, it was arranged that the company should sit down toiffin. Previous to this, it was remarked by the passengers, who were on the fore part of the ship, that there was a good deal of vapour coming out of the waste steam pipe, and Mr. Brewer went to enquire into the cause. Mr. Brewer met Mr. Scott, who, on being asked what was wrong, said the safety valves were leaking and the boilers priming. Mr. Brewer suggested that the engines should be slowed down, but Mr. Scott said they were going very slow and also that there was only 12 lbs. of steam in the boilers. It was then arranged that Mr. Brewer should not visit the engine room at all until after tiffin, by which time there would be enough steam in the boilers to allow him to adjust the safety valves. Shortly after this, the steam ceased to come out of the waste steam pipe, and the whole of the Europeans on board, with the exception of Mr. Woods, the chief engineer, who remained below, went into tiffin in the Chinese cabin stb., which had been fitted up for the occasion. This was about a quarter past two o'clock. Three quarters of an hour afterwards, the steam was again heard roaring through the waste steam pipe, and Mr. Pinker left the table to see what was the matter. Mr. Brewer followed and went onto the upper deck and looked down through the skylight into the engine room, and saw that the pressure gauge showed between eleven and twelve pounds of steam. Shortly afterwards the noise of the steam escaping ceased and Mr. Brewer returned to the cabin and again sat down at the table. He had not been seated more than a few minutes when he and the others felt themselves suddenly hurled into the air. None of those whom we have interviewed remember anything more, until they found themselves struggling in the water, when the fore part of the steamer some four or five hundred yards off. Mr. Brewer says he did not even hear the sound of the explosion, and Capt. Hayland says all he remembers is his head striking the water, and one of his legs coming in contact with a piece of wood. Captain Hayland and Mr. Brewer swam towards the after deck-house roof, which, strange to say, was completely intact and was assisted out of the water by Messrs. Caldwell and Fraser-Smith, who had already succeeded in scrambling out of the water on to it. Mr. da Costa had also been pulled out of the water in an unconscious state. He was afterwards raised off the dock, on which he was lying with the water washing over him, and placed in a cane chair, which was hauled on to the roof of the house by one of the other survivors. Those on the raft saw Mrs. Robert Fraser-Smith floating away on a piece of the wreckage, but they were unable to render assistance. They also saw a couple of bodies of Europeans floating about, apparently dead, one of them having on a brown coat. It was also observed that there

were a number of persons on the fore part, enlightened and prominent members. Mr. of the steamer, that part being almost uninjured, engaged lowering a boat; and in a short time this boat, with the Portuguese boatswain and a Chinaman on board, came to the deck-house roof and took on board all those who were on it. Mr. da Costa was first lifted on board, and then the others got into the boat. About an hour afterwards a junk bore down and took them all on board and also sent sampans to the steamer and brought off all those that were on the wreck. A little later on another junk bore down, and reported that they had picked up Mrs. R. Fraser-Smith, and a Portuguese seaman who had got adrift in one of the boats. Mr. da Costa was placed in the cabin of the junk and every attention was paid to him, and Mr. Brewer and the Portuguese boatswain transferred themselves to the other junk to look after the comfort of Mrs. Smith, who was also placed in the cabin, and rendered as much attention to her as was possible under the circumstances. The junk people were very kind and considerate, and did everything in their power to alleviate the misery of the survivors' position. It must have been about 3.20 p.m. when the explosion occurred, because Captain Hayland found that his watch had stopped at 3.25, and Mr. Brewer, when he got out of the water, looked at his watch and saw it was just about 20 mins. past 3. Before the junks left the wreck, an endeavour was made to get some things of the ship, but the only articles saved were a number of law papers belonging to Mr. Caldwell, a small bag belonging to Mr. R. Fraser-Smith, and some other trifling articles. Mr. da Costa never recovered consciousness, despite the efforts made to restore him, and he died on board the junk about seven o'clock. His death seems to have been caused by concussion of the brain or spinal cord. There is a deep cut, as if made by a severe blow, on his temple. The junks started for Hongkong about half-past four or five o'clock, by which time natives were busy loading the vessel. Hongkong was reached about half-past ten by the junks, but as they anchored far down the harbour, it was some considerable time afterwards before the party was landed. Mr. Caldwell went off to the steamer *China* near by and asked those on board to take the injured survivors ashore. Those on board the *China* very kindly did. Those Europeans who have been saved are—Captain Hayland, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Fraser-Smith, Mr. Brewer and Mr. Caldwell. The others are missing, and there is little doubt that they have met their death, either by scalding, drowning, or being hit by some of the debris. Nine Chinese are also missing. All those who were saved will be in the after part of the steamer when the explosion occurred are more or less injured. Captain Hayland, who is in Hospital, is severely strained and bruised all over, Mr. Brewer is also bruised all over the upper part of the body; he also received a cut on the back of the head. Both attained got their faces temporarily disfigured; but their injuries are not of a serious nature, and they are expected to get over them soon. The dead bodies of two Chinese who were picked up by the junks and brought to Hongkong are dreadfully scalded.

The cause of the explosion is not definitely known; but as the writer will likely be made the subject of an official enquiry, we refrain from saying anything about it.

This forenoon divers and diving apparatus were despatched from Kowloon Docks to the scene of the disaster to search for the missing bodies.

Since writing the above, we learn that Mr. Robert Fraser-Smith was the first person to reach the deck-house roof, on which was then lying the dead body of a Chinese. This gentleman's injuries are more serious than those sustained by any of the other survivors, but they are not so serious as to lead to apprehension. He has sustained a severe cut on the head, and his legs have been seriously damaged. We also learn that Mr. Frizell's dead body was seen to come to the surface, and then disappear, a fact which dispels all doubts as to this gentleman's fate.

Mr. Caldwell was fortunate enough to escape with one or two slight bruises, and Mr. Robert Fraser-Smith, though seriously shaken, has not received any injury which is at all likely to prove fatal.

A Chinese boy who has been saved is now in Hospital suffering from a broken leg and other injuries.

When our reporter called on Captain Hayland and Mr. Brewer, both gentlemen were able to converse with him freely.

The following shows how the passengers were seated at table when the explosion occurred, and those marked with an asterisk represent those who have been killed:—

Captain Hayland.

Mrs. R. Fraser-Smith.

Mr. R. Fraser-Smith.

Mr. G. Frizell.

Mr. S. Fraser-Smith.

Mr. C. Caldwell.

Mr. J. S. Brewer.

Mr. P. A. da Costa.

Mr. D. E. Caldwell.

Mr. S. F. Pinker.

Mr. W. L. Scott.

Mr. J. S. Brewer.

Mr. G. Frizell.

Mr. S. Fraser-Smith.

Mr. C. Caldwell.

Mr. J. S. Brewer.

Mr. G. Frizell.

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